



Title: Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Planning Process Update

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Purpose:

At the August 27, 2020 Policy and Planning Committee Meeting, staff will provide an overview of the next phase of focused project planning work in the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay (SMCHB) Subwatershed.

Background:

In 2014, building on the successful focused implementation model piloted in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, the MCWD Board of Managers selected the SMCHB Subwatershed as a priority geography for capital project implementation. Following the selection of SMCHB in 2015, the City of Victoria and MCWD executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which identifies the mutual value both agencies find in cooperative planning, coordination across agencies on priority water resource issues, and increasing regulatory coordination to support and foster integrated water and natural resources management. This document has played a significant role in shaping the partnership between the two agencies over the last five years.

In 2016, MCWD initiated an 18-month planning process which convened staff and policy makers from the geography to engage in the proactive development of a subwatershed implementation plan which integrates identified water resources issues and natural resource opportunities with local land use and planning context. Due to the geographic scale and varied political landscapes across the subwatershed, SMCHB was subdivided into four management units, each with unique issues, drivers, and strategies and distinct partnership approaches. Through this process, the Pierson-Marsh-Wassermann management unit broadly, and specifically the restoration of Wassermann Lake, was identified as a short term implementation opportunity. The attached "How Water Works" map provides an overview of how water moves into and through the subwatershed, shaping the management unit approach.

From 2017 through today, MCWD has focused capital project implementation on Wassermann Lake and its drainage area, while remaining responsive to other opportunities that have emerged across the subwatershed. Through this focused capital project work, we have accomplished the following:

- Addressed all identified watershed sources of phosphorus to Wassermann Lake
- Reduced common carp below the target density of 50 kg/ha through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Habitat Restoration Program
- Created the City's first nature-based park that restores habitat, protects and improves Wassermann Lake, and leverages unique interpretation to raise public awareness of the watershed
- Secured funding to address internal loading through alum treatment planned for 2021, a project which is predicted to result in Wassermann Lake meeting state water quality standards
- Leveraged 1.06 million dollars of outside investment into the City through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, the Board of Water and Soil Resources Clean Water Fund, and partnership with Lennar, a private developer

In addition to the focused project implementation work completed in partnership with the City of Victoria, in 2018, MCWD participated in Victoria's Comprehensive Plan development process. This cooperative planning effort integrated investments in Wassermann Lake into a broader greenway vision as the City grows west into the 27-acre future annexation area called the western growth area. MCWD and the City jointly developed a vision and recommendations

for an interconnected greenbelt system in the City of Victoria that “build[s] off of the City’s existing park and trail system, incorporating new public nodes on each lake, connecting to passive and active recreational areas, and enhancing the public experience of natural systems” (see attached Greenway Corridor Policy). The Greenway Corridor Policy provides an innovative framework for integrating future capital project investment into local growth planning, leveraging each agency’s unique strengths and authorities. This vision document sets the stage for the next phase of project implementation in partnership with the City of Victoria.

Summary:

As MCWD completes its focused restoration of Wassermann Lake, it is positioned to begin the next phase of capital project implementation, which will focus on the western growth area. While the SMCHB Subwatershed Plan identifies project areas and implementation strategies, and the Greenway Corridor Policy provides a vision and broad framework, operationalizing the plan requires integration with local planning context, agency partners, and key landowners to develop an implementation plan based on need, opportunity, and partnership potential.

The development of an implementation plan for the western growth area will leverage both internal staff teams and external stakeholder input in order to:

- Build support for the next phase of capital project implementation work from the SMCHB Subwatershed Coalition, with the City of Victoria as a critical partner for successful implementation
- Validate known, and identify any additional, project opportunities to create a capital project implementation plan that refines project outputs, timing, and vision
- Integrates project initiatives with local planning context, refining the shared vision into an implementation approach that leverages authority and resources across agencies

At the August 27, 2020 Policy and Planning Committee, staff will present the proposed planning process for the next phase of capital project planning in the western growth area, including:

- An introduction to the western growth area and rationale for selection of this geography in the next round of focused implementation
- Characterizing lessons learned from work related to Wassermann Lake, and implications for the western growth area
- An overview of the proposed planning process, including both internal team roles and external partner engagement

If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact Anna Brown at 952-641-4522 or abrown@minnehahacreek.org.

Supporting documents:

- Project Charter: SMCHB Planning Phase II – This document provides a high level introduction to the western growth area planning process.
- Greenway Corridor Policy – Selected pages from the City of Victoria’s Comprehensive Plan introducing the greenway and associated policy proposals.
- MCWD Projects (Map)
- Project Areas (Map)
- How Water Works (Map)

SMCHB PROJECT PLANNING PHASE II

Project Charter

Project Purpose: Develop framework and plan for the next phase of project implementation. In developing that plan, MCWD will seek to engage staff, the Board, and stakeholder agencies to achieve clarity of vision and purpose, and ensure alignment with broader SMCHB strategy.

Statement of Need: The SMCHB Subwatershed Team is completing its first phase of focused project implementation. While the SMCHB Subwatershed Plan identifies project priorities and implementation strategies, operationalizing that plan requires integration with local planning context and agency partners to identify shortest-term priorities based on need, opportunity, and partnership potential.

Objectives:

- Generate internal (staff, Board) and external (agency partners, public) buyoff on next phase of implementation work
- Integrate project initiatives with planning context, refining the shared vision into an implementation approach that leverages authority and resources across agencies
- Validate priority opportunities to better understand project feasibility and outputs, project timing, and vision

Project Lead:

Name: Anna Brown

Department: Project Planning

Role and Responsibility:

- Lead in developing and running planning process.
- Relationship manager for SMCHB Cross-Agency Partnership.
- Identify and manage external consultants.

Project Team:

Department: Communications and Engagement

Lead: Trevor Born

Role and Responsibility:

- Lead in development and implementation of two complimentary engagement plans, including post-initiative engagement:
 - Re-engaging the broad group of SMCHB Stakeholders, the SMCHB Subwatershed Partnership
 - Engagement of key partners in the Western Growth Area

- Support Project Manager in specific meeting and communications preparations.

Department: Research and Monitoring

Lead: Brian Beck

Role and Responsibility:

- Assemble and evaluate baseline data for planning focus area, identifying data gaps and evaluating existing feasibility studies.
- Lead in the development of a 2D model for Victoria and the western growth area that helps identify and validate project opportunities and associated metrics.
- Develop complimentary, multi-year monitoring plan that fills existing knowledge gaps and aligns with focal areas.

Department: GIS

Lead: Alex Steele

Role and Responsibility:

- Support planning, engagement and communications efforts through GIS:
 - Continue building and refining the Six Mile – WGA opportunity screening web app
 - Create maps, visuals, graphics as needed to support MCWD's planning work
- Facilitate application of newly adopted IT tools to support the District's work in Six Mile and the WGA, including integration with the new permitting and project management systems.
- Assist in the development of spatial datasets and analysis to support MCWD's 2D modeling efforts.

Department: Permitting

Lead: Tom Dietrich

Role and Responsibility:

- Support the next phase MOU by leading in the development of a regulatory coordination framework that bolsters partnership between the City, MCWD, and potential developers, and positions the permitting department as the lead entity on routine regulatory coordination and opportunity screening.
- Support the development of GIS based opportunity screening applications that reflect the best available understanding of likely regulated areas, especially in the context of wetland

regulations, and facilitates the identification of opportunities to exceed regulatory standards.

Project Partners:

- Members of the SMCHB Cross-Agency Coordination Team (Victoria, St. Bonifacius, Minnetrista, Laketown Township, Three Rivers Park District, Carver County, Hennepin County, Carver County SWCD): Political buy-off and support, integration of non-water cobenefits, sharing of local plans and data.
- City of Victoria: Critical member of SMCHB Coordination Team, specific shared policy needs, primary driver of future land use, need full buy-off and support
- Landowners: Shape ability and timeline to implement projects.
- MCWD Board of Managers: Buyoff of area of focus and strategy for SMCHB project implementation.

Project Timeline:

Duration: The planning process is estimated to run approximately 6 months from kick-off through completion.

Milestones:

1. Partner Reengagement: one on ones with key agency personnel to preview process kick-off and invite participation
2. Convene cross-agency partnership: host a series of meetings with purpose of maintaining buy-off on SMCHB strategy as we move into the next phase of planning and implementation.
3. Workshop issues and priorities with City of Victoria: As we continue to prioritize work in the upper subwatershed, need to maintain partnership with the City and establish clear vision, goals, and roles.
4. Develop and execute landowner outreach strategy: understanding landowner goals and partnership interest will be determining factor in project timeline development.

Important Dates:

April 2021: Early budget forecast. Identify possible additions/modifications to CIP by or before this meeting.

May 28, 2021: LSOHC application deadline. Will need to identify whether this planning process will yield applicable opportunities by early April to meet application timeline. (Approximate – based on last years' deadline)

Dependencies:

- Landowner interest and engagement will significantly shape our ability to implement projects.

- City of Victoria's willingness to leverage their development process to realize Greenway vision will shape the extent to which that vision can be realized.

Project workplan: *(link or insert)*

Project Close-Out:

Deliverables:

- Memorandum of understanding with the City of Victoria detailing coordination process, priority parcels, and roles and responsibilities in establishing shared greenway vision.
- A small area plan for the western growth area that operationalizes the greenway vision by identifying project priorities, partners, expected implementation timeline, and possible funding sources.
- Engagement plan for maintenance of SMCHB cross agency partnership.

Budget:

MCWD Budget: \$60,000 (2020 Budgeted Amount)

External Revenue: N/A

VICTORIA CHAIN OF LAKES GREENWAY

The City of Victoria is a healthy, active, and interconnected community built around abundant amenities including its lakes, parks and trails which create a place where people want to live, work and play.

Victoria's success, as a vibrant livable community, is founded on a vision where economic growth, high quality built environments, and healthy natural systems work in harmony to cultivate value for everyone. To elevate and extend this success, the City is establishing a bold vision for the future that continues to emphasize the overarching benefits of integrating natural systems with plans for sustainable growth of the built environment.

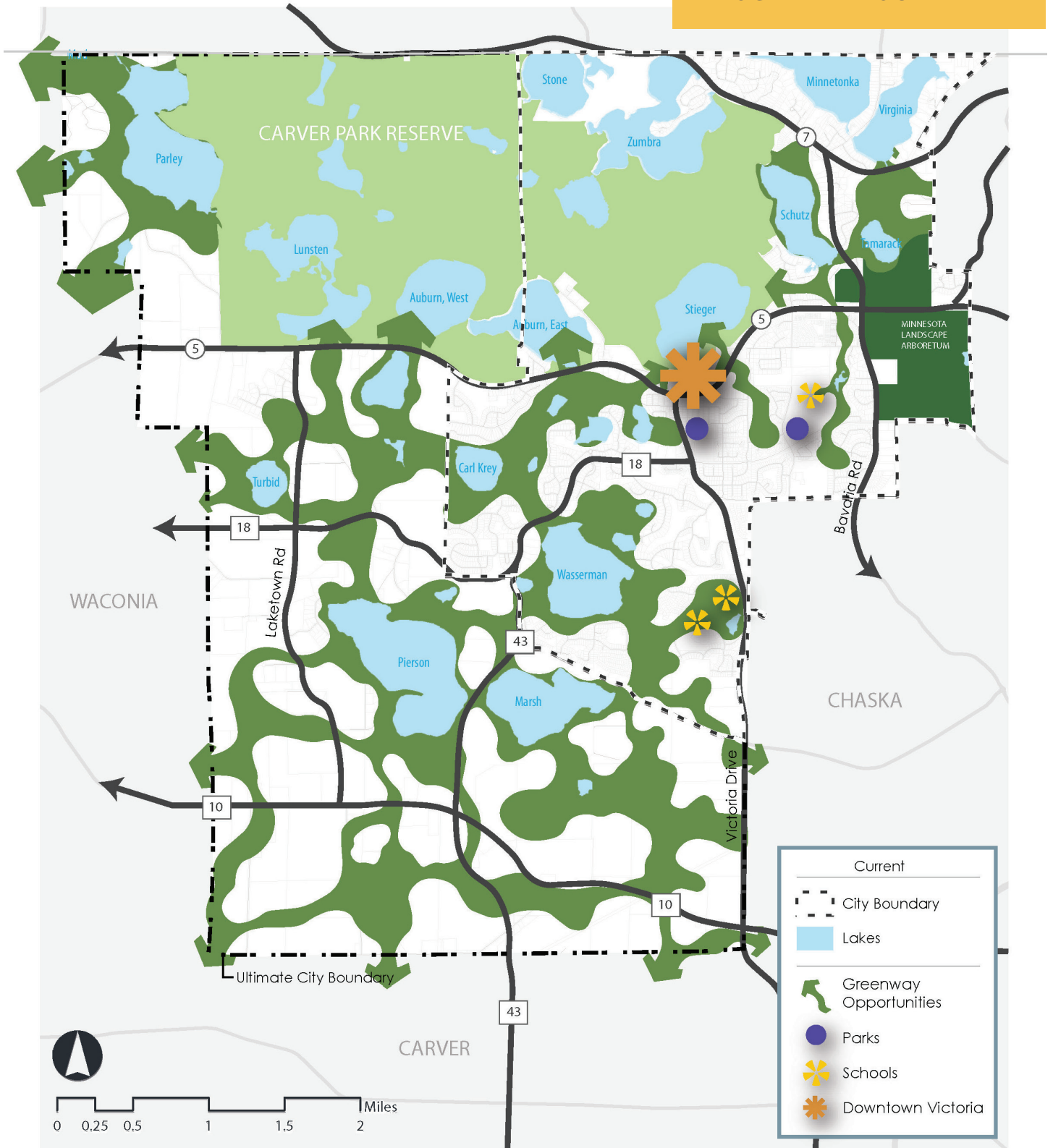
The City is endowed with significant natural features, including its own chain of lakes, which form the headwaters of Lake Minnetonka. Building off of Victoria's identity as the City of lakes, parks and trails, a vision for a Victoria Chain of Lakes has been established that will connect the City through a contiguous network of natural areas, trail corridors, parks, and public activity nodes.

The Victoria Chain of Lakes reflects an understanding that Victoria's natural systems create a unique sense of place. Preserving natural features, and strengthening the connection between them and the built environment provides social and economic value to the City; by reducing long term infrastructure costs, creating higher property values, and supporting a healthy and thriving community.

Victoria's Chain of Lakes will leverage the City's extraordinary natural resources into an interconnected and publicly accessible greenway system. The Chain of Lakes plan seeks to build off of the City's existing park and trail system, incorporating new public nodes on each lake, connecting to passive and active recreational areas, and enhancing the public experience of natural systems. The greenway will provide enhanced multimodal connections to housing and area amenities, including Downtown, Lions Park, Carver Park Reserve, the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, and Lake Waconia. Figure 4.4 provides an illustrative view of the Chain of Lakes vision.

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan serves as a roadmap for this effort to enhance future development through the preservation and enhancement of Victoria's natural heritage. Following plan adoption, the City will work to develop complementary land use tools and, in partnership with Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Carver County and other public and private partners to develop a strategic implementation plan to realize the vision of the Victoria Chain of Lakes. The implementation of this vision is explored further in "Victoria Chain of Lakes Greenway Policy & Implementation" on page 46.

FIGURE 4.4 VICTORIA CHAIN OF LAKES GREENWAY VISION



VICTORIA CHAIN OF LAKES GREENWAY POLICY & IMPLEMENTATION

PURPOSE

Through its Land Use policies, Victoria seeks to preserve not only what is required by existing State and regional statutes, but additional high quality natural resources and open spaces. In partnership with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and developers, Victoria will create a contiguous network of natural area patches and corridors. This network will provide corridors for outdoor recreation, non-motorized transportation, habitat preservation and restoration, and ecosystem functions. Figure 4.7 highlights a conceptual greenway network, which includes existing and proposed parks, trail corridors, and open spaces and some upland areas that serve as critical connecting areas.

Concurrent to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan process, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) and the City of Victoria collaborated on a study for the future of the western growth area. The purpose of the planning process was to:

- Understand likely future development patterns
- Preserve and enhance ecologic, hydrologic and natural systems
- Balance property owner and future developer desires with City-wide objectives

The goals for the study are:

- Improve natural systems
- Improve quality of development
- Reduce public expenditure
- Reduce public conflicts
- Reduce developer time and cost of review
- Reduce risk for development
- Align Shared values between City, MCWD, land owners, home buyers and residents

WHAT DOES THE GREENWAY CORRIDOR INCLUDE?

Tier 1 includes areas that are already restricted for development by Federal, State, or Local statutes:

- Wetlands
- Open Water (Lakes, Streams)
- Floodways and Floodplains
- Hydric Soils

Tier 2 further looks at land cover and natural resources and adds the following layers:

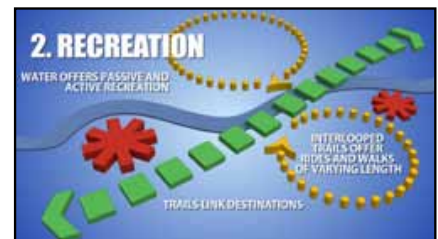
- Stream and wetland buffers
- Natural corridors and woodlands
- Steep slopes

Connective corridors that help achieve the Victoria Greenway framework by looking at Tiers 1 and 2 and connecting them to form a network of open space corridors that will benefit ecological, environmental, and recreational systems in Victoria.

Corridors link larger hubs allowing plants and animals to thrive in a functioning ecosystem.



Destination trails with a natural signature tie together a seamless system of local parks, regional parks, local trails, greenways and schools.



Buffer strips, native vegetation and land management practices improve water quality and ecosystem health.



Trails with grade separation and four-season maintenance link activity centers across the county and link a feeder system of local trails.



The Dakota County Greenway Guidebook outlines four major objectives for its greenways, shown above.

HOW IS THE GREENWAY CORRIDOR POLICY IMPLEMENTED?

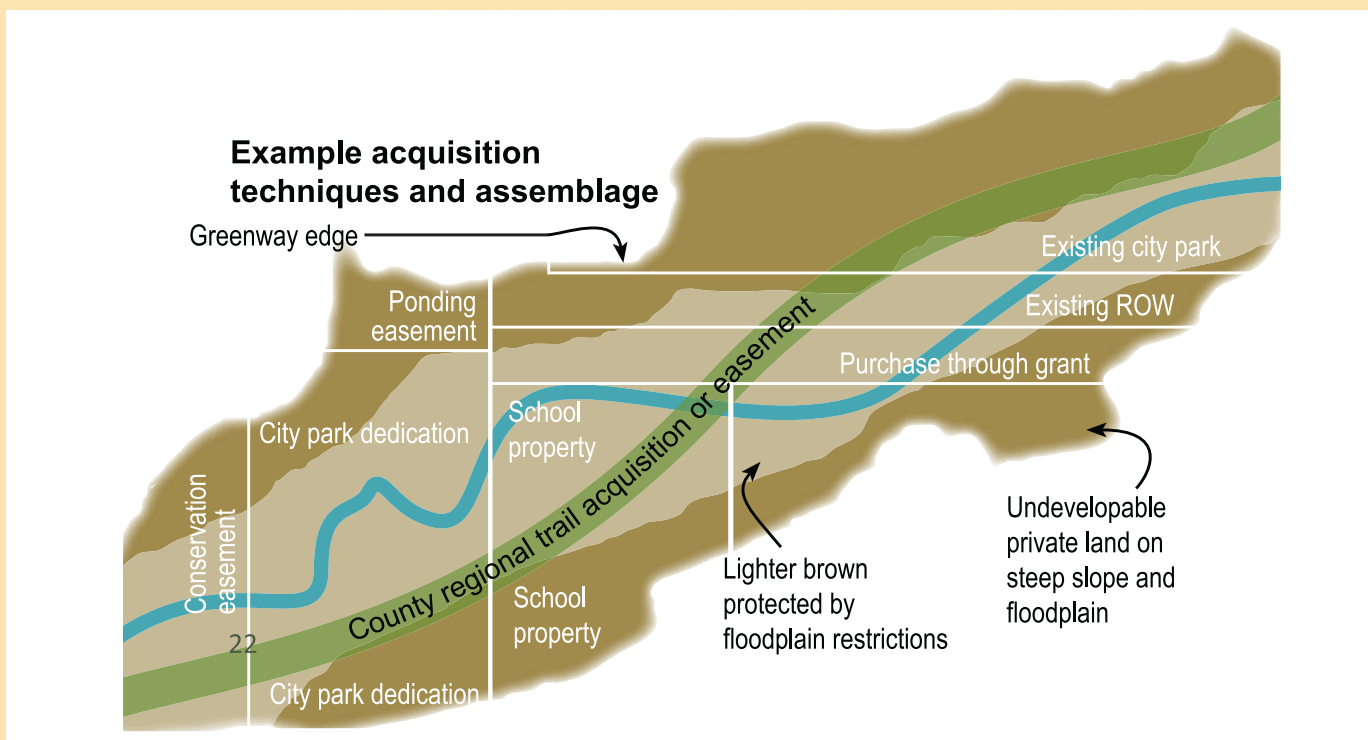
Existing development regulations protect Tier 1 items.

Tier 2 items and connective corridors will be protected through a number of different tools available to the City, County, and Watershed Districts such as:

- » City, regional, and State policies
- » Zoning overlay district
- » PUD negotiations
- » Density transfers
- » Dedication
- » Acquisition of land
- » Coordination with Landowners
- » Conservation Easements
- » Utilization of existing public land
- » Grant funding

A typical acquisition strategy for protecting greenway lands and features might utilize the following prioritization:

- 1) Use existing public land that is already secured to create corridors. No ownership change is required. Examples include existing parks, ponding areas, schools, wildlife areas and other public land.
- 2) Preserve corridors in coordination with land development. Use park dedication, ponding areas, PUDs, and subdivision requirements to assemble corridors.
- 3) Take advantage of existing land use regulations that protect open space. Public ownership may not be needed in these areas beyond the 30-foot trail easement. Examples include floodplain regulations, shore land zoning, wetland protection areas, bluff protection areas, etc.
- 4) Strategically purchase property or easements as necessary. Leverage regional, state, and federal grants and existing land conservation programs as sources of revenue and provide local match as needed. Use local funding from county and city sources without match only when all other avenues have been explored.



The connective corridor search areas identified in Figure 4.7 should be considered diagrammatic and as the name implies, search areas. It may not be necessary to protect the entire search area, but rather a portion of it, to create and preserve connectivity between existing patches of Tier 1 and 2 lands.

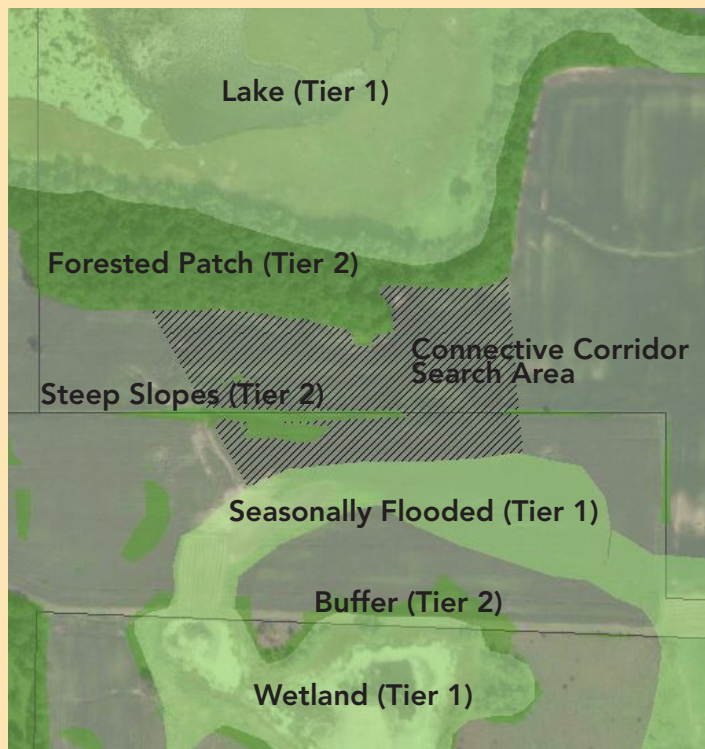
As opportunities arise for the preservation of lands within Tier 2 or the connective corridor search areas, the City and/or Watershed District should undertake actions to protect these natural features and connections considering the following principles of landscape ecology:

- » Bigger patches function better than smaller patches
- » Smaller patches function better than no patches
- » Patches connected with multiple connections function better than patches only connected by one connection
- » Connected patches function better than isolated patches
- » Wider corridors function better than narrower corridors
- » Continuously connected corridors function better than "stepping stone" corridors
- » "Stepping stone" corridors function better than no corridor

For more information, see "Landscape Ecology Principles in Landscape Architecture and Land-Use Planning" by Dramstad, Olson, and Forman.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THE GREENWAY CORRIDOR POLICY?

In order to fully realize and continue to support The City of Lakes and Parks Vision, the Greenway Corridor Policy will provide a framework for a connected system of open areas, parks, greenways, trails, wetlands, and water bodies. By establishing a set of guidelines and strategies for growth and development early on, the implementation of the greenway corridor vision can more easily be realized.

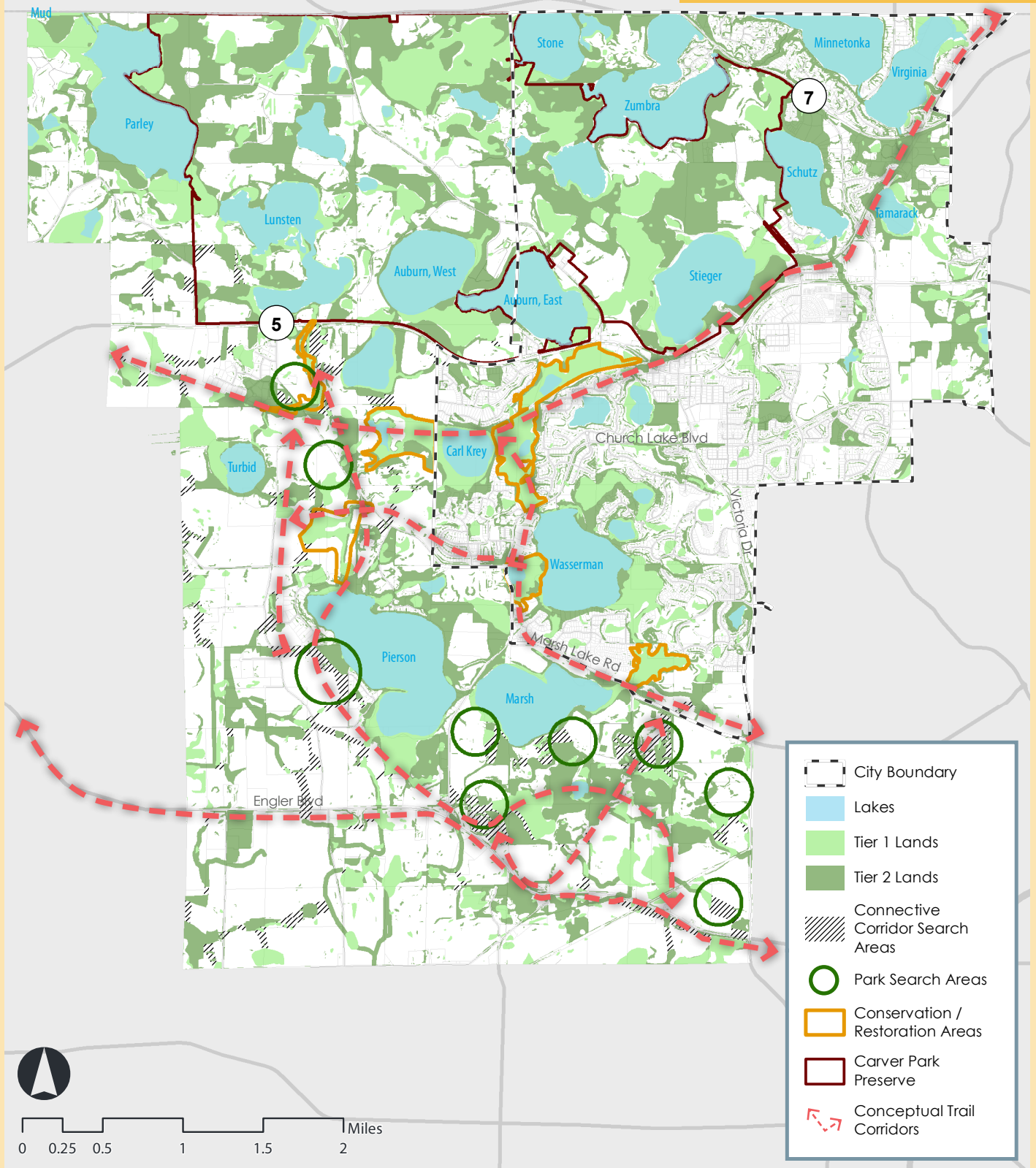


The image (left) illustrates the concept of the Connective Corridor Search Area, to connect natural features, habitat, and buffers for stormwater runoff. In some instances recreational features such as parks or trails may be able to be incorporated when the area develops.

While protecting more land leads to better ecological functioning, it may not be possible when weighed against development pressure.

In this case, it may not be necessary to protect the entire search area, instead protecting and enhancing a corridor within the search area to improve connectivity between the Tier 1 and 2 patches.

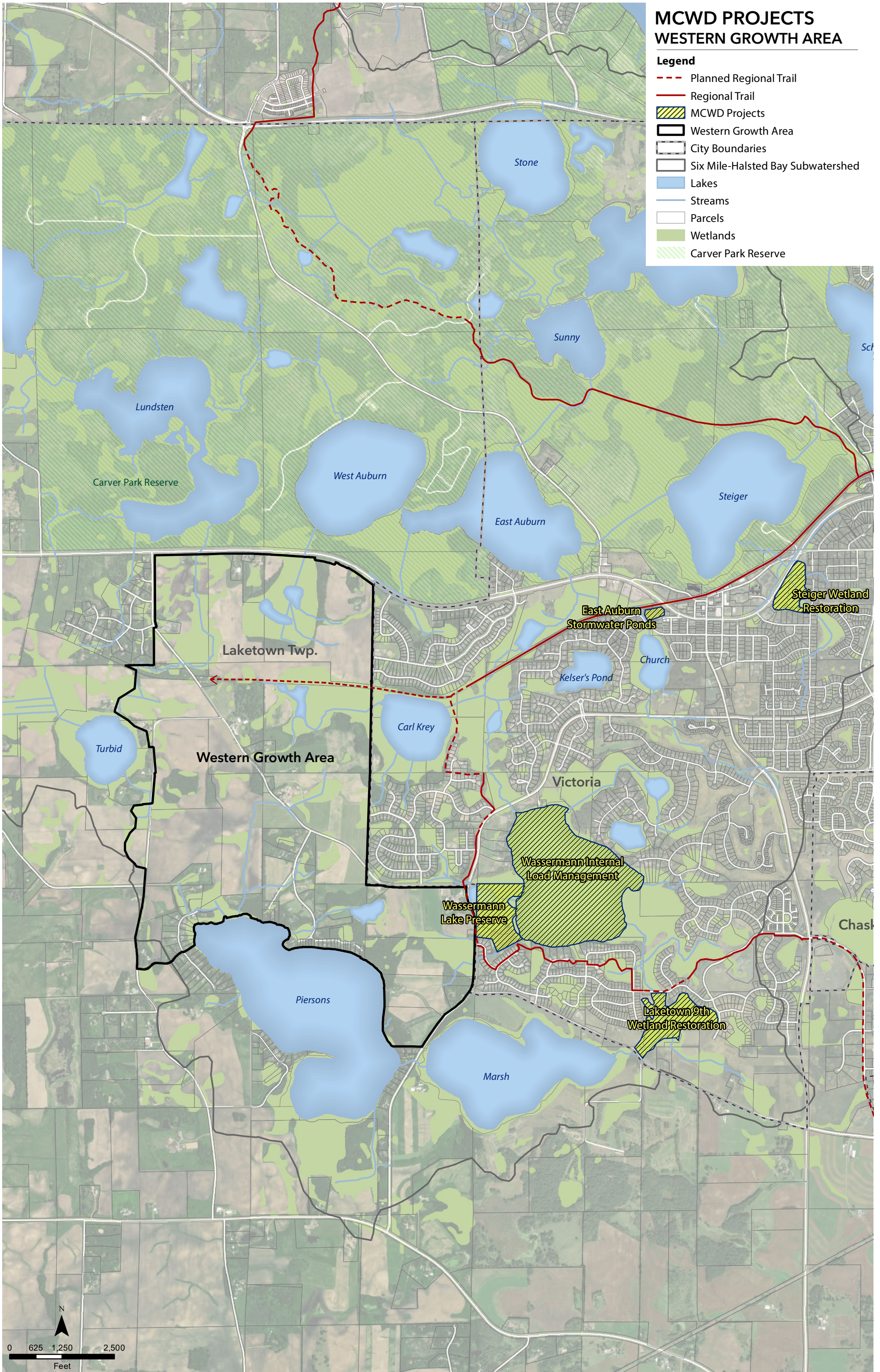
FIGURE 4.7 GREENWAY CORRIDOR



MCWD PROJECTS WESTERN GROWTH AREA

Legend

- - - Planned Regional Trail
- Regional Trail
- MCWD Projects
- Western Growth Area
- City Boundaries
- Six Mile-Halsted Bay Subwatershed
- Lakes
- Streams
- Parcels
- Wetlands
- Carver Park Reserve



PROJECT AREAS WESTERN GROWTH AREA

Legend

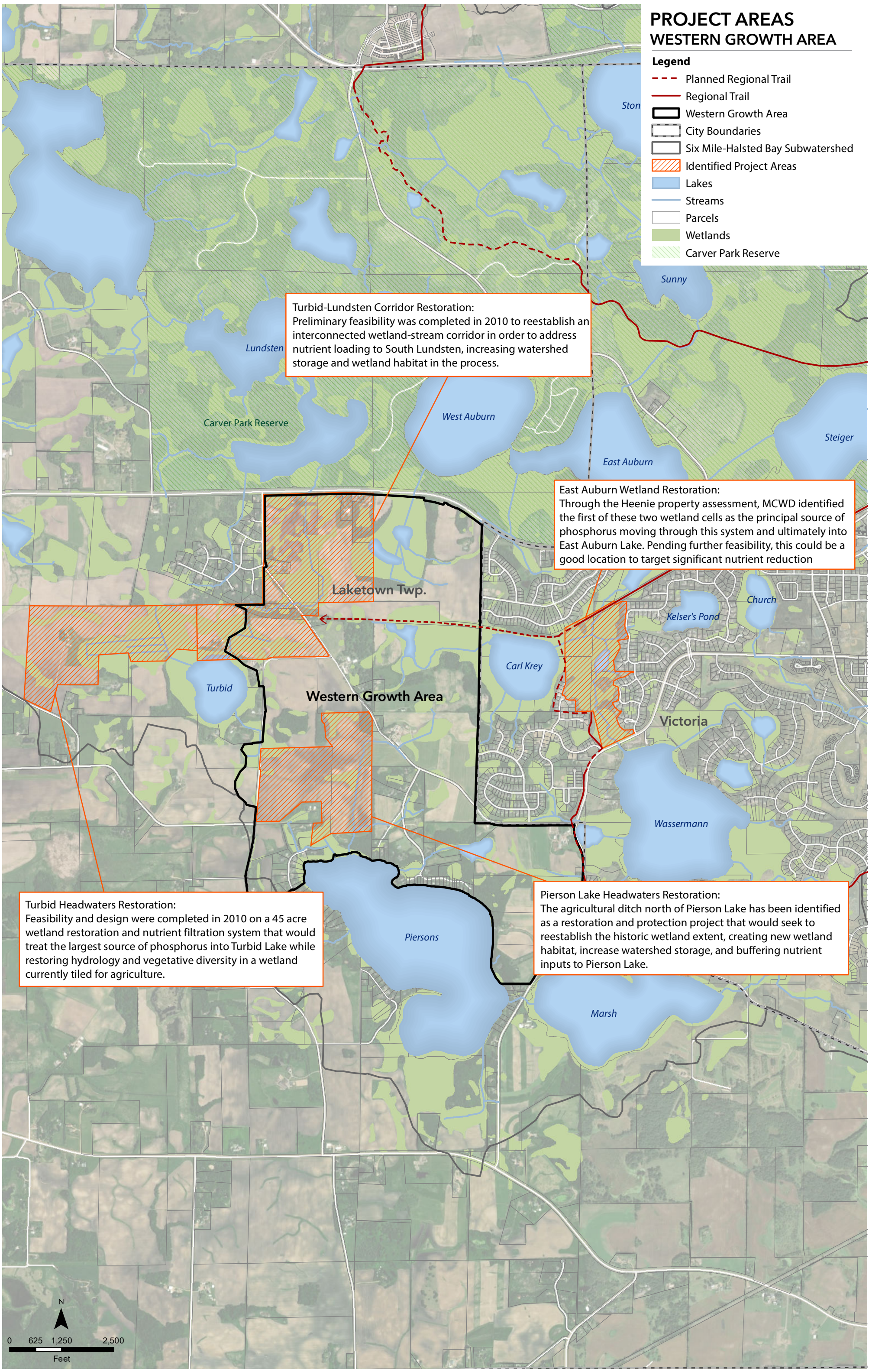
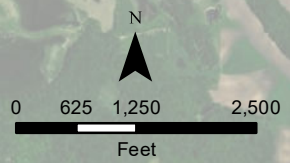
- Planned Regional Trail
- Regional Trail
- Western Growth Area
- City Boundaries
- Six Mile-Halsted Bay Subwatershed
- Identified Project Areas
- Lakes
- Streams
- Parcels
- Wetlands
- Carver Park Reserve

Turbid-Lundsten Corridor Restoration:
Preliminary feasibility was completed in 2010 to reestablish an interconnected wetland-stream corridor in order to address nutrient loading to South Lundsten, increasing watershed storage and wetland habitat in the process.

East Auburn Wetland Restoration:
Through the Heenie property assessment, MCWD identified the first of these two wetland cells as the principal source of phosphorus moving through this system and ultimately into East Auburn Lake. Pending further feasibility, this could be a good location to target significant nutrient reduction

Turbid Headwaters Restoration:
Feasibility and design were completed in 2010 on a 45 acre wetland restoration and nutrient filtration system that would treat the largest source of phosphorus into Turbid Lake while restoring hydrology and vegetative diversity in a wetland currently tilled for agriculture.

Pierson Lake Headwaters Restoration:
The agricultural ditch north of Pierson Lake has been identified as a restoration and protection project that would seek to reestablish the historic wetland extent, creating new wetland habitat, increase watershed storage, and buffering nutrient inputs to Pierson Lake.



HOW WATER WORKS WESTERN GROWTH AREA

Legend

- Western Growth Area
- City Boundaries
- Six Mile-Halsted Bay Subwatershed
- Lakes
- Streams
- Wetlands (FAW)
- Downstream Waterbody**
 - East Auburn
 - West Auburn
 - Piersons
 - Wasserman
 - Lundsten
- Direction of Water Flow

